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### **'We mourn our brothers': Workers respond to Bloody Sunday and the conflict in Northern Ireland, 1968-72**

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‘We mourn our brothers ...’: Workers respond to Bloody Sunday and the conflict  
in Northern Ireland 1969-72<sup>1</sup>

In July 1970 Conor Cruise O’Brien told delegates to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions that the crisis in Northern Ireland was ‘a problem that affects everyone on this island, affects every Irish man, woman and child. Its repercussions have been felt throughout this island. They have been felt deeply in the political life of the 26-counties and they are likely to go on being felt.’<sup>2</sup> But as early as 1975 historian John A. Murphy was asserting that ‘the Northern troubles had amazingly little impact on the South’ and that ‘by and large, there was no popular involvement’ excepting the ‘emotional outburst and the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin after Bloody Sunday in Derry.’<sup>3</sup> In contrast more recently Diarmaid Ferriter has suggested that the ‘Troubles ... defined the island of Ireland in the 1970s.’<sup>4</sup> The early years of the conflict certainly saw evidence of substantial southern solidarity with northern nationalists, often expressed by workers and their trade unions. Though Bloody Sunday and its aftermath represented the highpoint of this it was far from the only example.<sup>5</sup> That the labour movement would be a focus for mobilization should not be surprising given that the republic was according to the *Washington Post* the ‘most unionized country in Western Europe.’<sup>6</sup> In 1970 there were 386,800 trade union members in the Republic of Ireland, around 52% of the workforce.<sup>7</sup> After a decade in which strikes had reached record levels, unions and industrial relations generally were central to Irish political debate.<sup>8</sup> Several unions, including the largest, the 150,000 strong Irish Transport and General Workers Union, also organized in Northern Ireland. Its 6,400 members there were largely Catholic, as

were the 3,500 northern members of the Irish National Teachers Organisation.<sup>9</sup> But nearly 20 trade unions in the Republic, with 54,800 members, had their headquarters in Britain and organized both north and south of the border. The most important of these was the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) which had 18,000 members in the republic. In Northern Ireland the ATGWU organized over 83,000 people, both Catholic and Protestant.<sup>10</sup> Rivalry (with deep historical roots) between these bodies also influenced their reaction to events in the north.<sup>11</sup>

## 1968-71

After the civil rights march in Derry on October 5 1968, Labour TD Michael Mullen complained that 'we seem to have stalled in this part of Ireland on the important matter of abolishing partition.'<sup>12</sup> Mullen's republican background (he had been in the IRA during 1940s) and his extensive republican contacts would influence strongly the reaction of his union, the ITGWU, to the outbreak of the conflict in 1969.<sup>13</sup> That August saw the Battle of the Bogside in Derry and inter-communal violence in Belfast in which several people were killed and hundreds driven from their homes. Following this Mullen, now ITGWU general secretary, travelled to Belfast, Derry and Newry 'for the purpose of organizing and assisting in measures to relieve distress among the members of the union.' All of the ITGWU's 140 branches were instructed to call meetings to discuss the crisis and to offer accommodation to refugees if necessary.<sup>14</sup> The union donated £5,000 for use by its members in the North and southern activists collected over £6,500 for northern relief in the next few months.<sup>15</sup> There were a variety of other

responses. The Workers Union of Ireland (WUI), (whose 31,000 members were organised exclusively in the Republic) donated £500 towards northern relief. 800 Cork dockers worked one hour overtime to raise £400 for a fund established by the city's Lord Mayor T.P. Leahy. At a special meeting of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions (DCTU) Matt Merrigan of the ATGWU called for Irish military intervention to force the United Nations to take action. George O'Malley of the ITGWU asked that 'Dublin trade unionists should dig into their pockets and give everything needed, perhaps even arms.'<sup>16</sup> The DCTU itself collected £1,500 for northern relief.<sup>17</sup> Demonstrations in support of nationalists took place across the state, some of which involved industrial action. Dockers in Galway struck and joined ITGWU members in marching to a protest rally in Eyre Square. Dockers and meat factory workers in Sligo also took unofficial strike action and demanded that the Irish Army intervene.<sup>18</sup> But the historical tensions between Irish and cross-channel unions were also evident. The ITGWU's *Liberty* criticized unnamed 'prominent six county trade unionists' for their failure to condemn 'B Special and Paisleyite terror' and pointedly asked whether ICTU president James McMorow, (sic) a member of the 'British-based ... AEFU' would denounce the 'killing, the maiming and the abuse of Irish Catholic workers by the bigoted sectarian para-military B Specials and their anti-Christ supporters led by a specimen of the male species who claims to be a priest of sorts.'<sup>19</sup> At Wexford trades council Thomas Roche of the National Engineering and Electrical Trade Union (NEETU) called for all workers in 26 counties to 'withdraw their cards from English based unions.'<sup>20</sup> However local delegates from the National Graphical Association (NGA) disagreed.<sup>21</sup> During 1970 the ITGWU began campaigning for the release of Belfast docker Joe McBrinn, a member of the

unions National Executive, who was being held in England on arms charges.<sup>22</sup> Michael Mullen also organized a function for Fianna Fáil's Charles Haughey at Liberty Hall on the eve of the Arms Trial.<sup>23</sup> But different approaches were evident in other unions. At the WUI conference during May 1970 delegates voted unanimously to condemn gunrunning and general secretary Denis Larkin warned against the danger of a 'holocaust' of sectarian violence emerging as a result of the northern crisis. Delegates calling for military support for northern nationalists were heavily outvoted.<sup>24</sup>

### Internment

Violence in the North had increased steadily during 1971 but the introduction of internment in August that year produced the next major popular response south of the border. The ITGWU estimated that at least 34 internees were members of the union and quickly endorsed protest campaigns.<sup>25</sup> The union supported an appeal from the DCTU for workers to donate one hours pay a week to a Six County Internees Dependents Fund.<sup>26</sup> By winter thousands were contributing to this campaign.<sup>27</sup> (American trade unions also donated \$10,000). 2,000 joined a march in Dublin organised by the Committee of Trade Unionists Opposed to Internment, representing 200 Dublin shop stewards from various industries. Among the speakers were Matt Merrigan of the ATGWU, Aidin Ní Chaoimh of the National Union of Journalists and Brian Stafford, a participant in the Glasgow UCS sit-in. When the march reached the British Embassy in Merrion Square there were scuffles with Gardai.<sup>28</sup> A few days later 60 Dublin Corporation workers, led by trades Council delegate and republican activist Thomas O'Neill marched to

the Embassy to hand in an anti-interment petition. Trades councils in other areas also organized public protests.<sup>29</sup> The Dublin District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union called on its (British) executive to put pressure on Downing Street to end internment. The Irish Graphical Society also called on the ICTU to demand the release of prisoners.<sup>30</sup> The Dublin Branch of the Amalgamated Woodworkers and Painters (a British-based union) called for strikes in Northern Ireland in protest at internment.<sup>31</sup> However the DCTU claimed that strikes would have 'little or no useful effect' and that workers should instead contribute to the dependent's fund.<sup>32</sup> Despite vocal protests by Irish branches of cross channel unions, *Liberty* could not resist suggesting that 'it must surely be an extraordinary experience for any Irishman who is a member of a British trade union, to know that Irish workers in the Six Counties are being ground under the heel of the British jackboot. So much so, that all Irish workers in British trade unions in Ireland should demand that their unions condemn in the most forthright terms internment ... they should demand that these same unions bring pressure on the British Government to atone for their six-county sins and make immediate reparation. It is the least we expect of them.'<sup>33</sup> As violence escalated during the winter of 1971 more cautious tones were struck by some ITGWU officials, such as vice-president John Carroll who warned that 'Ireland today hovers on the brink of civil war.'<sup>34</sup>

### 'Bring the country to a standstill'

Such caution seemed meaningless after 30 January 1972; Bloody Sunday, after which *Liberty* could claim that 'the Ulster question has become the Irish question

once more.’<sup>35</sup> The British ambassador Sir John Peck claimed that the massacre ‘unleashed a wave of fury and exasperation the like of which I had never encountered in my life, in Egypt or Cyprus or anywhere else.’<sup>36</sup> At around 10.30pm on the night of Sunday 30 January 1972 50 people gathered at the British Embassy.<sup>37</sup> This was the initial public response to the news that earlier in the day British troops had shot dead protesters in Derry. By then there were few in the Republic who disagreed with Derry MP John Hume, who claimed that the Paratroopers had carried out ‘cold-blooded mass murder; another Sharpeville; another Bloody Sunday.’ News outlets also reported Derry’s James Connolly Republican Club’s demand that workers ‘go on immediate general strike and bring the country to a standstill.’<sup>38</sup>

#### Monday 31 January

On Monday morning walkouts began from factories in the Shannon Industrial Estate, Co. Clare. An estimated 2,000 workers from the E-I, Progress and Lena factories marched to the airport terminal and demanded the tricolour be lowered to half-mast. In Cork 400 dockers stopped work, boarding a British ship and forced it to fly a black flag. By noon thousands of workers in the city were on strike, at Ford, the Pfizer plant, Dunlop, C.I.E. and local building sites. Strikers converged on the city centre where ‘so many marches were taking place that at times columns of protesting workers passed each other in the streets going in opposite directions.’ These included ‘hundreds of girls’ from the Sunbeam textile factory and workers from Gouldings chemicals and the O’Brien’s Plastic plant, along with numerous small firms. In Dundalk at least 5,000 struck, led by shoe

factory workers. Trade unionist and local republican Peter Duffy called for a national strike on day of the Derry funerals. In Waterford Irish Dunlop workers struck. In Galway dockers boarded a British ship and daubed slogans on it, forcing the crew to replace it's ensign with a black flag. University Collge Galway was shut down as 2,000 students and staff marched to Eyre Square, where the British owned United Dominons Trust bank was occupied. In Sligo dockworkers refused to unload a British ship until it lowered its ensign and flew a tricolour at half-mast. also In Clonmel workers at Barlow Heating struck and marched to the Town Hall. There were also walkouts in Limerick and Carrickmacross. Telephone operators began refusing to handle British calls, airport ground crew refused to service British aircraft and newsagents took British newspapers off their shelves.<sup>39</sup>

In Dublin the focus for protest was the Embassy. From morning 'small and large groups of people from various firms' arrived there. Many carried black flags or mock coffins painted with the number '13', while their representatives handed in letters of protest. While 'vociferous' most demonstrators 'nevertheless initially obeyed the directions of the Gardai.' During the day there were protest strikes at the Jeyes factory in Finglas, a Ringsend construction site and Royal Irish Ltd in Glasnevin. At lunchtime over 1,000 Volkswagen, Fiat and Blackhodge assembly plant workers arrived. Their representatives noted that they included 'many ex-British servicemen who are sickened by the actions of this uniformed body of killers.' They were joined by ESB workers and students from the Royal College of Surgeons. By 2pm around 6,000 students, from University College Dublin and



Trinity, Bolton Street and Kevin Street, had gathered in the Square, along with workers from Gallagher's Tobacco in Tallaght. During the afternoon protesters threw 'bottles, stones, coins, bolts (and) an occasional petrol bomb' at the building. But despite some minor damage, by 6pm Gardai considered that the Merrion Square area was fairly calm.<sup>40</sup>

That evening there were emergency council meetings in many towns.

Many councillors demanded a national day of mourning, United Nations intervention in the North, boycotts of British goods or British withdrawal.

Speeches from across the political spectrum, urging an aggressive response and drawing parallels with the struggles of 1916-21 were commonplace. Taoiseach Jack Lynch appeared on RTE, in a broadcast watched by 79% of households, and announced that the Irish ambassador was being withdrawn from London and that Wednesday, 2nd February would be a National Day of Mourning.<sup>41</sup> All schools would be closed and businesses and workplaces were asked to mark the day in a 'suitable' manner. The Government had been receiving telegrams all day demanding such a response. Several trade union executives, including the ITGWU, the Post Office Workers Union (POWU) and the Association of Higher Civil Servants were among those making this call.<sup>42</sup>

While Lynch had been appearing on television, the protests in Dublin had intensified. After 7pm several thousand people gathered at an Official Sinn Féin rally in Merrion Square. Petrol bombs, flares and rockets were used in a sustained attack on the Embassy. Gardai baton charged the crowds, who scattered, attacking a squad car and firebombing the British Passport Office

in the process.<sup>43</sup> By 9.30pm another march, this time from a Provisional republican meeting at the GPO, arrived in a 'violent mood.' On their way to the Embassy some of the marchers had petrol bombed British airline offices in Grafton Street. There were now 20,000 people in Merrion Square and a 'continuous see-saw struggle' between protesters who threw petrol bombs, bricks and tins of paint at the Embassy and the Gardai went on for an hour. However Gardai noted there were 'large number(s) of genuine demonstrators, especially women, with (a) passive attitude (and) a body of persons whose sympathies lay with the Gardai' observing but not taking part in the clashes.<sup>44</sup> At 10.30pm Gardai used a loud speaker to ask 'all law-abiding citizens' to leave the area and then carried out a baton charge. A combination of heavy rain and Garda sweeps saw the crowd dwindle, though several hundred remained until early hours of Tuesday morning, when clerical students from St. Columban's College in Navan arrived to begin a vigil.<sup>45</sup>

## 1 February

Protests continued across the state on Tuesday. Sligo saw the 'biggest protest march ever held in the town' with 10,000 joining a Trades Council demonstration.<sup>46</sup> In Cork workers struck again at Ford and Pfizer, buses stopped for an hour and the National Busmen's Union announced an all-day strike for Wednesday. In Tralee 8,000 took part in a two-hour Trades Council organized stoppage with crowds reciting the Rosary in Denny Street.<sup>47</sup> In Ballyshannon 1,000 people, including large numbers of school students, took to the streets. 400

workers at Tipperary's Silvermines began a two-day strike. 2,000 people marched in Limerick, including nurses and ITGWU members. Classes at St. Patrick's College Maynooth were suspended and 1,000 students and staff marched the 15 miles to Dublin to join protests at the Embassy.<sup>48</sup> 150 'Foxrock housewives' carrying placards denouncing the 'new Black and Tans' picketed the British Ambassador's residence in Sandyford. Waterford CIE tractor driver Bill Collins returned his Second World War medals to the British government, one of several Irish veterans to do so.<sup>49</sup> Though most protests were peaceful, there were arson and bomb attacks on British owned property across the republic and in many areas members of the Provisional or Official IRAs (or both) openly attended demonstrations.<sup>50</sup>

In Dublin throughout the day 'thousands of people ... from various industrial and commercial concerns' continued to gather in Merrion Square. They included 1,000 workers from Tallaght and Walkinstown, 500 from Hammond Lane and Irish Industrial Gases. Gardai described some protesters as 'dignified', others as 'boisterous' and quite a few as 'violent to the extent that they indulged in missile throwing and chanting anti-British slogans.' By 10pm that night there were around 10,000 people at the Embassy, many arriving from a republican meeting in O'Connell Street 'whipped into frenzied excitement (and) wildly shouting that the Embassy should be burned down.' Gardai claimed that 'many North of Ireland people were present in the crowd (and) encouraged the more militant demonstrators to charge the Garda cordon.' A lorry was driven at Garda lines but

its driver was dragged from the cab and the vehicle disabled. At least 70 petrol bombs thrown at the Embassy and the Fire Brigade doused the front hallway of the building with foam to prevent fire spreading. At 11.30 a gelignite bomb was thrown, destroying the Embassy front door and injuring two Gardai. However this was not followed by another assault and the crowd began to disperse. By early morning, calm was restored. The last of the embassy's staff left after the bomb attack and Gardai took control of the building. Early on Wednesday the Embassy informed the Department of Justice that it 'seemed clear that the Gardai could not successfully resist the expected further attempts to burn down the Embassy if they were not supported by the Defence Forces.' Gardai noted that 'consideration was ... given at this stage to seeking the assistance of the Defence Forces for the protection of the Embassy, but it was decided that their presence would only exacerbate the position if arms were displayed.' Since no one could be found to replace the Embassy door, 'old pieces of wood' were used to block the entrance.<sup>51</sup>

'Pray for peace and reconciliation'?

During Tuesday unions had been issuing instructions in preparation for the Day of Mourning. The ITGWU announced that their 6,000 members in Northern Ireland were to strike for three days. Air traffic controllers at Shannon Airport and workers at Cadbury in Rathmore, Co. Kerry announced that they would be striking on Wednesday. NEETU asked its members to support protests in their areas.<sup>52</sup> In Drogheda the Electrical Trades Union called for a one-day strike, while the POWU was also considering whether to call for a national stoppage.<sup>53</sup>

Congress president James Cox, speaking on behalf of the 'one organisation which unites the whole of the Irish working class' asserted that 'it was their view that a strike or a general stoppage of work would endanger rather than assist towards reconciliation and create hardship for workers and people least able to bear it.' Instead Cox suggested 'we should join in mourning all those who have died, and we should pray for peace and reconciliation.'<sup>54</sup> The construction trade unions announced a two-hour stoppage with the Construction Industry Federation agreeing that an hours wages would go the Derry relief fund. Most unions eventually called for a two-hour stoppage, instructing their members to support local demonstrations and contribute to relief funds.<sup>55</sup> (In Clonmel for example all organized workplaces were asked to donate an hour's pay).<sup>56</sup> Many workplaces and union branches specified a particular religious service, the Dublin print unions instructing their members attend mass in St. Saviours, Dominick St.<sup>57</sup> CIE workers were to march from their depots to attend 11am mass at Merchant's Quay. The Local Government and Public Services Union (LGPSU) instructed its members at Dublin Corporation to report for work as normal, to assemble at City Hall for 11am, attend a special mass at 11.30 and then march at 2pm to the union's Gardiner Place head office and after that to Parnell Square for a protest march called by the Trades Council.<sup>58</sup> Most unions called on their Dublin members to attend this event. The Federated Union of Employers recommended that 'member companies ... facilitate and co-operate with employees and trade unions in making arrangements for employees to have some hours leave of absence to attend religious services on this National Day of Mourning.'<sup>59</sup> The Irish Printing Federation recommended that staff be given time off to attend mass.<sup>60</sup> The Quinnsnorth and Pennys department stores announced that they

would shut for the entire day. The small firms association, RGDATA, called for shops and pubs to restrict their opening hours. Many firms announced half-day or two hour closures with banks not opening until 1.30pm on Wednesday. However several businesses announced they would open as normal but would donate the day's wages to relief funds. The Irish Farmers Association also asked their members to suspend farm business for at least an hour and to join local protests.<sup>61</sup>

### 'The Nation closes down today'<sup>62</sup>

A day of unparalleled protest was expected on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Radio Eireann was to broadcast the funeral mass live from Derry. In the evening RTE television was to feature a live mass from Donnybrook said by Belfast priest Fr. Des Wilson, followed by the documentary 'John Humes's Derry' (first shown in October 1969). A performance of the cantata 'A Terrible Beauty' composed by Brian Boydell for the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, would be shown before discussion of the day's events. RTE technicians had made it clear they would refuse to work on any programmes not connected with the Day of Mourning. Large numbers of public representatives and thousands of ordinary citizens were expected to travel to the funerals themselves.<sup>63</sup>

### The Day of Mourning

Despite 'exceptionally high wind and driving rain' thousands took to the streets of towns and villages from early morning on Wednesday.<sup>64</sup> 20,000 attended

Waterford's 'biggest demonstration for almost 60 years'. ATGWU contingents carried banners stating 'we mourn our brothers murdered' along with black flags and wooden coffins. Despite some 'shouting, notably from the younger element' the protest was 'very orderly.'<sup>65</sup> In Cork city thousands joined a 'protest so disorganised that over a dozen parades took place.' The Shandon Bells rang for half an hour and services took place in all the city's churches and its synagogue. Thousands rallied on the Grand Parade while others attended rival political meetings afterwards.<sup>66</sup> In Limerick 10,000 marched, including 2,000 CIE workers and 500 teachers. In Ennis 5,000 took to the streets, in Skibereen 3,000, in Castlebar 5,000, Carlow 7,000, Newbridge 1,500, Wexford 6,000, Kilkenny 6,000, Dundalk 10,000, Dungarvan 3,000, Tullamore 6,000, Tuam 2,000 and Thurles 4,000. In New Ross workers from the ESB Great Island Station attended requiem mass and then joined employees from Albatros Ltd, Bolands, Texaco, and Staffords on a march through the town. In Cavan town, 3,000 people marched led by an ITGWU banner stating 'Take Strike Action.' In Mallow over 2,000 people joined a demonstration organized by the local branches of the ITGWU and the Post Office Engineering Union. In every locality contingents were identified by their workplaces; M/S Cold Chon and Galway Concrete in Oranmore, the chipboard companies in Scariff, GEC in Dunleer, ESB workers in Tarbert, bacon factory workers in Claremorris, Kingswear and Gentext in Naas, mine workers in Tynagh (who struck for 24 hours), employees from Stedfast and Fane Shoes in Carrickmacross, Bord na Mona and ESB workers in Crossmolina, hospital staff in Ballinasloe, CIE workers in Longford, Golden Vale dairies in Clonakilty, Roadstone, Shanks Ltd and Avoca Mines in Arklow, Sandersons and Irish Ropes in Newbridge, McCarthy's Foundry and Irish Forest Products in Mountrath,

Roadmaster Caravans, Irish Clay and the local textile mills in Castlecomer. Road, rail and freight services were disrupted as large numbers of CIE workers took part in the protests. At many of the protests trades councils were the main organizers and union speakers were prominent on platforms.<sup>67</sup> In many areas parades included school students, Macra na Feirme members, GAA clubs, farmers, Old IRA contingents, the Organisation of Ex-Servicemen or community groups.<sup>68</sup> The scene in Ardee, Co. Louth was not untypical of the smaller towns. Marchers included 'one Garda in plain-clothes, another on duty eyeing up the crowd ... duffle coated, rain soaked clergy, nuns in black headscarves, youths wearing black berets, Ardee ITGWU, Ardee Order of Malta, Ardee Band, Ardee Bread Co., businessmen, men in green berets, children in duffles and little girls wearing plastic rainhats and bewildered looks, old men, old women moving their lips slowly.'<sup>69</sup> The majority of parades went to, or from, requiem masses. Though militant anti-British rhetoric and the burning of flags and effigies was commonplace, most passed off entirely peacefully.<sup>70</sup> Platforms were cross-party, with employers, trade unionists and clergy represented. Almost every town saw Church of Ireland, and in many areas Methodist and Presbyterian services as well.<sup>71</sup> In some areas republicans were speakers or in prominent positions among the protesters. In Waterford a combined party from both IRAs fired a volley of shots at the rally's conclusion. They were rarely in a position to direct the protests however.<sup>72</sup>

## The Embassy



In Dublin, a city of 'closed shops, bars, restaurants, theatres and hotels ... boarded over frontage of British firms (with) a hint of anarchy in the air' thousands attended various religious services.<sup>73</sup> From 9.30 onwards 'thousands of protesting people in marching formation ... en route to and from Church' began to pass the Embassy. Hundreds of school children and students milled around Merrion Square 'waiting for something to happen.' By lunchtime dockers, ESB workers, 'neat and orderly civil servants', busworkers and staff from the Department of Post & Telegraphs arrived. Female telephonists knelt and said the rosary while 'most people, including the Gardai, joined in.'<sup>74</sup> But the main focus for was the Trades Council march from Parnell Square. To the muffled drums of the ITGWU band, the marchers made their way to the southside, including 'many women, some with babes in arms' and Merrion Square soon became 'a mass of thronged people.' There were 500 Gardai present, including most of the senior officers in Dublin. They reported that 'Merrion Square ... a portion of Holles Street and Lower Mount Street were choc a bloc and, judging by the official allowance of four persons per square yard, the density of the crowd was estimated at 50,000.'<sup>75</sup> There was a 'mighty crush' with people climbing trees and lamp-posts and protesters pushed right on top of Garda lines. Railings were torn up to allow the crowd to spill into Merrion Square Park. From 3pm missiles were thrown as the crowd 'became excited and began (calling) for the destruction of the Embassy.' Petrol bombs soon exploded to cheers, 'as if ... at Croke Park.' Some of these fell short and hit protesters. Finglas teenager John Noonan, who was 'in the front line... shouting abuse at the Gardai, the embassy, at anyone trying to stop us' had his jacket set on fire by a petrol bomb.<sup>76</sup> One observer thought the chanting more 'the good humoured cheers of a football

crowd (than) the angry roars of a mob.’<sup>77</sup> Some Trinity students, who had been at the Embassy for a party hosted by the ambassador’s son, himself studying at TCD, a few weeks earlier, were among those chanting ‘if you hate the British Army clap your hands.’<sup>78</sup> Gardai claimed that those leading the attacks were ‘North of Ireland people, Sinn Féin and Connolly Youth elements.’ But they also noted the large numbers of ‘elderly people, women and children’ and concluded that ‘any drastic action ... in view of the density of the crowd could have fatal consequences ... preservation of life was much more important than the preservation of property.’<sup>79</sup> By 4pm the makeshift Embassy door was on fire but initially the flames did not spread to the rest of the building.

Believing that the protesters had run out of ammunition, Garda control issued instructions for garages not to sell petrol in containers. However at least three men climbed onto the balconies on Merrion Square and managed to scale precariously across 35 yards. With the ‘deftness of a cat burgler’ one raised a tricolour to half-mast on the Embassy flagpole. Then he used a hatchet to smash some of the upper windows. To cheers and the singing of ‘For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’, a can of petrol was poured in through the broken window. The flames grew fiercer to chants of ‘burn, burn, burn’ and ‘more, more, more.’ One observer remembered ‘half the crowd there roared their support for the torching of the building ... while the other half, me included, looked on with a certain amount of bourgeois horror.’<sup>80</sup> According to Gardai the Dublin Fire Brigade ‘declined to fight the fire...(stating) that they would preserve the adjoining buildings if necessary.’ Thousands stayed to watch the Embassy burn, while impromptu rallies were held on the corner of the park. Over 1,000 people joined a march to

Mountjoy prison to demand the release of Provisional IRA prisoners. The Officials held their own meeting and then led crowds back to the Embassy area. By 9.30 several thousand people had returned to Merrion Square, including what Gardai described as a 'strong element of hooligans' who unleashed an 'intense barrage of missiles' at them. The British Passport Office was attacked and during the fighting a petrol bomb was thrown at Holles Street hospital with 'some lunatics suggesting it was a British hospital and should be burned down.'<sup>81</sup> The Gardai, now reinforced by units from outside Dublin, charged the crowds, while rioting developed with cars overturned and used as barricades in Mount Street. Shop windows in Grafton Street and its environs were smashed and British Leyland offices in Percy Place was firebombed. There were over 30 arrests and 60 injuries reported, but by 12.30am the area was quiet. The Gardai concluded that 'the burning of the Embassy could not have been prevented on this occasion. It was not anticipated that such a vast throng of people would participate in the Assembly outside the Embassy, but the fact that Wednesday ... was officially proclaimed a day of National mourning seemed to incense all otherwise moderate persons and whipped them into acts of remorse and oppression against the Embassy building.' Gardai believed that 'many of the demonstrators did not approve of the attack on (them) but all of them had a grievance against the Embassy building over, inter alia, the shooting of the thirteen persons in Derry.' They also asserted that their own officers (24 of whom were hospitalized) 'stood up well to the ferocious attacks made on them' though 'for many ... especially the younger members, it as a frightening experience.'<sup>82</sup>

## The day after

On Thursday morning the sun shone in Dublin as hundreds of sightseers visited the ruins of the Embassy. In Cork a march by 1,000 mainly young protesters ended in running battles with Gardai at the British Rail office in Patrick Street.<sup>83</sup> Attention now turned to Sunday and the civil rights march planned for Newry. The march had been banned and speculation mounted about the potential for violence. SDLP MP Ivan Cooper called for Irish troops to be mobilised and ready to move into Newry if protesters were attacked.<sup>84</sup> On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 50,000 people marched in what was the last great civil rights protest. Though the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had asked southerners not to travel and to instead attend local solidarity protests, an estimated 10-15,000 came from the South. Thousands travelled by bus and train to Dundalk including workers who from as far as the Cement plant in Mungret, Co. Limerick. 3,000 demonstrated in Dublin, 1,000 in Cork, 1,000 in Athenry and 2,000 in Limerick. In Dun Laoghaire 700 marched to the British Legion offices. Meanwhile Castlebar saw the 'greatest show of unity in the county town since the days of the Land League' with 10,000 people taking part in a demonstration there.<sup>85</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> February over 10,000 attended a Provisional rally at the GPO.<sup>86</sup> The anger was also reflected in the republic's pop charts. In late February the Barleycorn's 'The Men Behind the Wire', No. 1 for five weeks, with over 100,000 copies sold, was replaced by Paul McCartney and Wings 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish.'<sup>87</sup> Thousands of workers had donated wages from the Day of Mourning to funds established for the victims of Bloody Sunday. The ITGWU collected £15,163 from its members by August 1972.<sup>88</sup> The miners at Arigna in Co. Leitrim donated

£736.95, and their employers matched that amount, raising £1,500.<sup>89</sup> £60 was collected by staff, including nuns, at St. Louis Secondary School in Monaghan.<sup>90</sup> Waterford United soccer star Alfie Hale personally collected £500.<sup>91</sup>

### A general strike?

There was no doubting the rage that followed the massacre, nor the huge level of popular protest in the days afterwards. The most widespread initial response to the killings had been unofficial industrial action. Trade unions and organized workplaces had formed the backbone of most of the three days of protests. Socialist activists would later reflect how most of the initial stoppages ‘occurred spontaneously, outside the trade union structures, and independently of the trade union militants.’<sup>92</sup> In an era when ‘the sacrosanct nature of the picket’ was widely respected it is not surprising that anger was expressed through strike action.<sup>93</sup> Eamonn McCann has argued that 2 February saw ‘the most widespread industrial action in the history of the state ... at least 90% of the state’s entire workforce stopped work for the day or for part of the day.’<sup>94</sup> By any standards it was an extraordinary protest. But was it a general strike? On the Day of Mourning there were no bus services in most provincial towns but rail services were generally unaffected. In Dublin a skeleton service of around 15% of the city’s buses operated.<sup>95</sup> Aer Lingus officially closed down operations for two hours and air traffic controllers stopped work between 11am and 3pm which severely disrupted flights. All B & I passenger and freight services were suspended on for the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> February.<sup>96</sup> The protests themselves differed significantly depending on location and those involved. While many

demonstrations had seen militant expressions of anger, others, especially outside the cities, had also been notable for their orderliness and religiosity. Most unions only gave instructions to their members to take time off work to attend religious services or local protests. In reality this often meant that many took most of Wednesday off, (and many probably did not go to work at all) but they were not regarded as being on strike. The fact that there were no power cuts, that newspapers were published and that radio and television operated caution against the idea of a complete shutdown. Many shops and pubs also opened, though with restricted hours.<sup>97</sup> In many cases management and employers facilitated or took part in the protests, joining marches alongside their workers, seemingly 'imbued with the same patriotic spirit.'<sup>98</sup> This spirit clearly had some limits however. 28 women were suspended with two days loss of pay by the owner of Irish Waterproof Ltd in Drumcondra for missing work in order to attend the funeral masses in Derry.<sup>99</sup>

Bloody Sunday also brought other tensions to the surface. The Navan Northern Aid Committee was among those calling on Irish workers to leave British based unions.<sup>100</sup> There was considerable pressure put on ATGWU members to leave their union, despite the fact that three of Derry dead had been members of it.<sup>101</sup> 50 Cavan members of the NGA threatened that they would refuse to pay their union subscriptions until the British government announced their withdrawal from Ireland. But Irish branches of British-based unions had also been part of the protests. The Transport Salaried Staffs Association called on the TUC and the British Labour Party to demand an end to repression. Carlow members of the Amalgamated Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers

employed at Thompson's Works asked their Newcastle-based executive to raise the question of withdrawal from Ireland.<sup>102</sup> Trade unionists also disagreed on the policies to be pursued towards Britain in the months after Bloody Sunday. The economic impacts of deteriorating Anglo-Irish relations were felt almost immediately.<sup>103</sup> While LGPSU members in Sligo were among those calling for a boycott of British goods, Tralee Trades Council 'cautioned against a total boycott ... which could have a retaliatory action from England and which would affect the employment of Irish workers.'<sup>104</sup> Both ITGWU and WUI conferences during 1972 saw emotional arguments about the conflict.<sup>105</sup> While some continued to demand support for nationalists, others increasingly warned of the prospect of sectarian civil war.<sup>106</sup> By August *Liberty* would suggest that though the 'minority' had been forced into 'self-defence measures' they should realise that the 'bombings, the shootings ... must now cease.'<sup>107</sup> The gradual withdrawal from direct engagement with northern issues, in part because of increasing civilian casualties caused by republican actions, was apparent across southern Ireland throughout late 1972 and would be evident in the unions as well.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless there were work stoppages during Seán MacStíofáin's hunger strike in late 1972.<sup>109</sup> There were workers protests in solidarity with Portlaoise hunger strikes during 1975 and 1977 and against emergency legislation in 1976.<sup>110</sup> The H-Block hunger strikes of 1980-81 also saw attempts to mobilize support around workplaces.<sup>111</sup> However nothing occurred again on the scale of the reaction to Bloody Sunday. Whether that moment marked a 'lost opportunity' or a 'sad moment' for Irish democracy depends on political perspective.<sup>112</sup> Understanding why so many workers were prepared to 'bring the country to a standstill' in 1972 but not on other occasions requires investigation of just how

deeply the Northern conflict really did impact on peoples lives in the republic and how many ordinary people viewed what was happening in 'the North.' Divisions among trade unionists reflected real division on the issue among the wider working class.

Brian Hanley.

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<sup>1</sup> *Munster Express*, 4 February 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Irish Congress of Trade Unions *Annual Report*, (Dublin, 1970), p. 385.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin, 1975) p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> D. Ferriter, *Ambiguous Republic: Ireland in the 1970s* (London, 2012) p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> B. Hanley, 'The South is in the Mood for Violence' in *History Ireland*, 1, Vol. 20, Jan/Feb. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> *Washington Post*, 8 August 1968.

<sup>7</sup> C. McCarthy, *The Decade of Upheaval: Irish trade unions in the Nineteen Sixties* (Dublin, 1973) p. 252. There were 263,000 trade unionists in Northern Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> M. Daly, *Sixties Ireland: Reshaping the Economy, State and Society, 1957-73* (Cambridge, 2016) pp. 77-80.



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- <sup>9</sup> Irish National Teachers Organisation, CEC Minutes 1970, information courtesy of Niamh Puirseil.
- <sup>10</sup> McCarthy, op. cit. p. 252
- <sup>11</sup> E. O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland 1824-2000* (Dublin, 2011) pp. 149-150, 163-169.
- <sup>12</sup> *Irish Times*, 8 Oct. 1968.
- <sup>13</sup> Mullen did not seek re-election as a TD after he became ITGWU general secretary in 1969. Marie Coleman, 'Mullen, Michael', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 6, (Cambridge, 2009) pp. 761-762.
- <sup>14</sup> *Liberty*, September and December 1969.
- <sup>15</sup> *Liberty*, December 1969 & January 1970.
- <sup>16</sup> *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1969.
- <sup>17</sup> S. Cody, J. O'Dowd & P. Rigney, *The Parliament of Labour: 100 Years of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions* (Dublin, 1986), p. 226.
- <sup>18</sup> G. Madden, *Political change in Northern Ireland and its impact on the west of Ireland* (MA: NUI Galway, 2013) p. 28.
- <sup>19</sup> *Liberty*, September 1969. James Morrow was Irish secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers, later the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW). He was a former Belfast shipyard worker. *Liberty's* hostility may have been related to the role his union played in the bitter maintenance dispute of early 1969, in which the ITGWU and the craft unions had clashed. McCarthy, op. cit. pp. 150-183.
- <sup>20</sup> *Wexford People*, 23 Aug. 1969.
- <sup>21</sup> *Wexford People*, 30 Aug. 1969.
- <sup>22</sup> *Liberty*, Jan. 1972.
- <sup>23</sup> Niamh Puirseil, *The Irish Labour Party 1922-73* (Dublin, 2007) p. 291.
- <sup>24</sup> *Irish Press*, 12 May 1970. Larkin and his union would take a far more critical attitude towards republicanism than the ITGWU. It is tempting that imagine that the presence of former British servicemen such as Paddy Cardiff and Jack Harte in leadership roles within the union accounts for some of this but that is conjecture. F. Devine, *Understanding Social Justice: Paddy Cardiff and the Discipline of Trade Unionism* (Dublin, 2002) & *Liberty*, March 2015.
- <sup>25</sup> *Liberty*, September 1971.
- <sup>26</sup> *Irish Times*, 12 Aug. 1971, S. Cody, J. O'Dowd, P. Rigney., *The Parliament of Labour: 100 Years of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions* (Dublin, 1986) p. 228.
- <sup>27</sup> My father and his workmates at the cement factory at Platin, Co. Meath among them.
- <sup>28</sup> *Irish Times*, 23 Aug. 1971
- <sup>29</sup> *Connacht Tribune*, 10 September 1971.
- <sup>30</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 Aug. 1971.
- <sup>31</sup> *Irish Times*, 12 Aug. 1971.
- <sup>32</sup> *Irish Times*, 27 Aug. 1971.
- <sup>33</sup> *Liberty*, Sept. 1971.
- <sup>34</sup> *Irish Press*, 3 Nov. 1971.
- <sup>35</sup> *Liberty*, Feb. 1972.
- <sup>36</sup> J. Peck, *From Dublin to Downing Street* (Dublin, 1978) pp. 3-4.
- <sup>37</sup> Report on the Bloody Sunday protests, Superintendent B. Clinton, 6 April 1972 in Department of Justice (D/J) 2003/26/6 National Archives Ireland (NAI).

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- <sup>38</sup> *Irish Press*, 31 Jan. 1972.
- <sup>39</sup> Reports from *Evening Press*, 31 Jan. 1972. *Cork Examiner*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Press* & *Irish Times* 1 Feb. 1972. *Anglo Celt*, *Connacht Tribune*, *Munster Express*, *Sligo Champion*, 4 Feb. 1972. *Clare Champion*, *Dundalk Democrat*, *Limerick Leader*, *Western People*, 5 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>40</sup> Superintendent B. Clinton, op. cit. D/J 2003/26/6 NAI.
- <sup>41</sup> G. Ivory, 'RTÉ and the Coverage of Northern Ireland on Television News Bulletins in the Early Years of the Troubles' in *Irish Communications Review*, 13, 2012. pp. 31-51.
- <sup>42</sup> Copies of telegrams in Department Taoiseach, (D/T) 2003/16/503 NAI.
- <sup>43</sup> The Official rally had been addressed by leading figures Tomas Mac Giolla, Malachy McGurran and Seamus Costello. *Irish Times*, 1 Feb. 1972. Official spokesman Tony Heffernan claimed that 'the Gardai were asked to stand back from the embassy, but did not do so until the missiles started flying ... they then formed up on the road for a baton charge and batoned people very badly. These people defended themselves as best they could.' *Evening Press*, 1 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>44</sup> Provisional IRA leader Joe Cahill claimed that 'we asked the Gardai to stand aside and let them wreck the place' but also that 'we appealed to the people not to attack the Gardai ... our policy not to provoke direct confrontation with the authorities in the 26 counties.' *Evening Press*, 1 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>45</sup> Superintendent B. Clinton, op. cit. D/J 2003/26/6 NAI. *Irish Press*, 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>46</sup> *Sligo Champion*, 5 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>47</sup> *The Kerryman*, 5 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>48</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 2 Feb. 1972. *Derry Journal*, 8 Feb. 1972. *Irish Press*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>49</sup> *Munster Express*, 25 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>50</sup> Targets included British Rail offices, the Royal Liver Society, the Royal Airforce Club in Dublin and shops including Austin Reed's outfitters, Maples and the Thomas Cooke Travel agency. *Cork Examiner*, 1 & 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>51</sup> Superintendent B. Clinton, op. cit. D/J 2003/26/6 NAI. In fact troops equipped with CS gas and rubber bullets had been mobilized at Cathal Brugha barracks. Information from former army officer on duty at the time.
- <sup>52</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>53</sup> *Evening Press*, 31 Jan. 1972.
- <sup>54</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 1 Feb. 1972. A Galway native, Cox was Regional Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers.
- <sup>55</sup> The ITGWU called for a stoppage from 12 noon to 1pm; the WUI recommended that its members stop work for a 'period not exceeding two hours'; ATGWU members were to stop work at lunchtime and take part in the Dublin protest; AGEMOU called on its members to attend the DCTU march. *Irish Press*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>56</sup> *Nationalist* (Clonmel) 12 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>57</sup> *Derry Journal*, 4 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>58</sup> *Evening Herald*, 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>59</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>60</sup> *Evening Herald*, 1 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>61</sup> *Cork Examiner*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Press*, *Irish Times*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>62</sup> *Irish Independent*, 2 Feb. 1972.

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- <sup>63</sup> Five cabinet ministers and at least 40 TDs attended the funerals, as did thousands of others from the Republic. *Irish Press*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>64</sup> *The Times*, 7 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>65</sup> *Munster Express*, 4 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>66</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>67</sup> In Clonmel for example, Joe Cooper of Belfast Trades Council spoke following the march, along with Labour TD Sean Treacy (of the Irish Shoe and Leather Workers Union), Cllr. W. Byrne of the ATGWU and Dixie Connel of the IPOEU. *Nationalist* (Clonmel) 26 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>68</sup> *Anglo-Celt, Drogheda Independent, Donegal Democrat, Kilkenny People, Nationalist and Leinster Times, New Ross Standard, Northern Standard, Longford Leader, Roscommon Herald, Sligo Champion, Westmeath –Offaly Independent, Wicklow People* 4 Feb. 1972. *Dundalk Democrat, Drogheda Independent, Kerryman, Kerryman* (North Cork edition), *Leinster Leader, Leitrim Observer, Limerick Leader, Nenagh Guardian, Mayo News, Meath Chronicle, Tipperary Star*, 5 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>69</sup> *Drogheda Independent*, 4 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>70</sup> Though this also reflected that there was no obvious target for anger in most areas. There were a number of instances of threats against British citizens living in the republic, though these were widely condemned. *Clare Champion*, 12 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>71</sup> There were a number of sectarian incidents however, including shots fired near Protestant homes in Wexford, the daubing of anti-Protestant slogans in Newbridge, Co. Kildare and allegations of intimidation in Monaghan. *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 4 Feb. 1972, *New Ross Standard*, 3 Feb. 1972, *Northern Standard*, 11 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>72</sup> *Munster Express*, 4 Feb. 1972. In some areas there were complaints about republican participation in or exclusion from, the speaking platforms. *Sligo Champion* 4 Feb. 1972. In Dublin and Cork city both Provisionals and Officials were strong enough to hold their own protest meetings.
- <sup>73</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 3 Feb. 1972. Jack Lynch, President de Valera and Liam Cosgrave attended mass officiated by Archbishop Charles McQuaid in the Pro-Cathedral. Tanaiste Erskine Childers attended a special service in St. Patrick's Cathedral. There were memorial services in the city's Presbyterian and Methodist churches and at all of Dublin's synagogues. *Irish Times*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>74</sup> *Irish Independent, Irish Times & Irish Press*, 3 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>75</sup> Superintendent B. Clinton, op. cit. D/J 2003/26/6 NAI.
- <sup>76</sup> J. Noonan, *What Do I Do Now?* (Dublin, 2005) p. 34.
- <sup>77</sup> John F. Buckley, *The Times*, 24 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>78</sup> Lucy O'Sullivan, *Trinity Tales: Trinity College in the Seventies*, (Dublin, 2011) p. 136.
- <sup>79</sup> Superintendent B. Clinton, op. cit. D/J 2003/26/6 NAI.
- <sup>80</sup> Anne Connolly, *Trinity Tales*, op. cit. p. 167. For UCD students participation see F. Dunlop, *Yes Taoiseach: Irish Politics from behind closed doors* (Dublin, 2005) p. 2. *Evening Herald*, 2 Feb. 1972.
- <sup>81</sup> Noonan, op.cit. pp. 33-35.
- <sup>82</sup> Report, Superintendent B. Clinton, 6 April 1972 in D/Justice 2003/26/6 NAI. There are widely divergent accounts of the demeanour of the Gardai during the

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disturbances. Bertie Ahern, among others, suggests that the Gardai 'hardly bothered to make an effort' to stop the burning. B. Ahern, *The Autobiography* (London, 2009) p. 31.

In contrast British ambassador John Peck claimed that the Gardai 'fought on as long as they could' and disputed the 'damaging and totally erroneous impression that the Dublin police had stood and done nothing.' Peck, op.cit. p. 11.

<sup>83</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 4 Feb. 1972.

<sup>84</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 4 Feb. 1972.

<sup>85</sup> *Irish Independent*, *Irish Press* & *Irish Times*, 7 Feb. 1972.

<sup>86</sup> *An Phoblacht*, March 1972.

<sup>87</sup> *Irish Press*, 7 Jan. 1972. The Barleycorn's success came despite controversy over lack of airtime on Radio Éireann. *Irish Times*, 8 April 1972. L. Gogan, *Larry Gogan's Pop File* (Dublin, 1979) p. 167.

<sup>88</sup> *Liberty*, Aug. 1972.

<sup>89</sup> *Leitrim Observer*, 26 Feb. 1972.

<sup>90</sup> *Northern Standard*, 11 Feb. 1972.

<sup>91</sup> *Kilkenny People*, 25 Feb. 1972.

<sup>92</sup> Peoples Democracy, 1978 conference document, Sean O'Mahony Papers, 44,241 National Library of Ireland. Many on the far-left would lament how they had been unable to channel the anger after Bloody Sunday into more concrete militancy.

<sup>93</sup> C. McCarthy, op.cit. p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> E. McCann, *Bloody Sunday in Derry: What Really Happened* (Dingle, 1992) p. 169.

<sup>95</sup> *Evening Press*, 3 Feb. 1972. John Noonan and his friends from Finglas took the 40A bus home after the rioting. Noonan, op. cit. p. 35.

<sup>96</sup> *Irish Independent*, 3 Feb. 1972.

<sup>97</sup> Many Dublin journalists retired to their usual haunt of Mulligans in Poolbeg Street in the aftermath of the burning. A. Madden, *Fear and Loathing in Dublin* (Dublin, 2009) pp. 10-11.

<sup>98</sup> *Munster Express*, 4 Feb. 1972. At Dunleer for example, the protest meeting was chaired by Martin Naughton, senior works manager at GEC. *Dundalk Democrat*, 5 Feb. 1972.

<sup>99</sup> JJ O'Keeffe to Jack Lynch, 2 Feb. 1972 in D/T 2003/16/504 NAI.

<sup>100</sup> *Meath Chronicle*, 12 Feb. 1972.

<sup>101</sup> M. Merrigan, *Eagle or Cuckoo: the Story of the ATGWU in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 236-238.

<sup>102</sup> *Nationalist & Leinster Times* 4 Feb. 1972.

<sup>103</sup> *Business and Finance* 10 Feb. 1972 & *Sunday Independent*, 13 February 1972.

<sup>104</sup> *Sligo Champion*, 11 Feb. 1972. *The Kerryman*, 19 Feb. 1972.

<sup>105</sup> F. Devine, *Organising History: a centenary of SIPTU* (Dublin, 2009) pp. 598-603 & 681-683. The Labour Party was also seriously divided over the issue during 1972. See Puirseil, op.cit. pp. 288-299.

<sup>106</sup> *Irish Times*, 29 May 1972.

<sup>107</sup> *Liberty*, August 1972.

<sup>108</sup> While unions would see division between supporters of the Officials and Provisionals and far-left organisations on the 'national question', there was also a significant body of opinion who wanted to avoid the issue altogether.

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<sup>109</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 10 Dec. 1972.

<sup>110</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 7 Feb. 1975 & 20 Sept 1976. *The Worker*, 18 Oct. 1976.

<sup>111</sup> F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H-Block: the Rise and Fall of the popular campaign against criminalization, 1976-82* (Liverpool, 2011) pp. 52, 102, 112-113.

<sup>112</sup> B. Anderson, *Joe Cahill: a Life in the IRA* (Dublin, 2002) pp. 239-241. D. Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland: Nation and State* (Dublin, 1994) p. 525. Joe Cahill and Dermot Keogh were both present at the burning of the Embassy. Cahill, a senior Provisional IRA leader would later claim that 'if we had been in a strong position politically, then we could have taken over the country.' Ironically he was credited in some accounts as having played a moderating role at Merrion Square. See T. P. Coogan, *The Irish: a personal view* (London, 1975) p. 225. Keogh was at the march with his workmates from the *Irish Press*. He later lamented the failure of the trade unions to prevent the IRA's 'wanton' burning of the Embassy. While republicans, from both the Provisional and Official IRA were active in Merrion Square it remains unknown who carried out the final burning. The then Provisional IRA Chief of Staff, Seán MacStíofáin, would later claim to wanted the Embassy to be destroyed by the crowd rather than by his men and to have ordered his Dublin commander to 'get your volunteers out and let the ordinary people take part.' P. McGuill, *Political Violence in the Republic of Ireland 1969-1997* (MA: UCD, 1998). p. 125.